

period. The Company hopes in this way to aid in the study of disease and disability among wage-earners, and desires to stimulate medical investigation and research. By offering these statistics to the medical profession and to public health and social workers, the Company expresses also its appreciation of the coöperation which it has received from physicians and others who have replied to inquiries and have given detailed information in thousands of cases. This assistance has helped to make the statistics more accurate and valuable. All inquiries should be addressed to Statistical Bureau, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, One Madison Avenue, New York.

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## The Halifax Disaster

**P**OSSIBLY no group of men was so profoundly affected by the terrible disaster which overwhelmed the city of Halifax on the morning of December 6th, as the physicians and surgeons. Within a few minutes of the explosion the wounded were being brought to the doctors' offices; and soon vast crowds of persons, not all of whom were injured, made efficient first aid exceedingly difficult.

Some doctors were continuously at work for upwards of thirty-six hours. As might well be expected, the work at the various hospitals was suddenly increased to an enormous extent. Motor cars were bringing in the wounded by the hundreds every hour. The number of scalp and eye wounds was very large; compound fractures and depressed cranial fractures were also very numerous. Some persons had as many as eighteen to twenty distinct wounds, not all from broken glass, for many severe injuries were caused by falling wreckage. A great many serious burns had to be treated at once. Numbers of persons pinned below the debris perished by fires which broke out in the ruined houses.

The medical officers in charge of hospitals report that many wounds became septic, but that wounds about the

eyes soon cleared up, even although at first they seemed very hopeless. There was only one case of incipient tetanus, and this was prevented from developing by free injections of anti-tetanic serum. Three cases of gas gangrene were met with.

Reliable figures are not yet available to represent the number of persons killed outright, dying of injuries, permanently injured, and with partial and complete loss of sight. Such data are being collected by Major Moore, C.A.M.C., of the Medical Relief Committee.

Professor Fraser Harris has been appointed historian of the medical aspect of the disaster, and has been assigned an office in the McCurdy Building, Hollis Street. He will make use of these and other data in compiling the complete account of the calamity on its medical side.

The visiting American surgeons give high praise to the nurses of the C.A.M.C., to the V.A.D. nurses, and to those ladies possessing the certificate of the St. John's Ambulance Association.

The doctors of dental surgery worked as hard as their medical brethren, and the students of dentistry were not a whit less active than the students of medicine: both acted as stretcher bearers and gave excellent first aid.

The response of the United States to the cry of distress from Halifax was prompt and exceedingly efficient. The following units arrived in quick succession:

1. The Massachusetts State Guard from Boston, with a personnel of thirty-two, commanded by Major Harold J. Gidding; these were assigned to the building known as Bellevue, once the residence of the General commanding the Halifax Garrison.

2. Dr. E. A. Codman's private hospital staff from Boston. This comprised fourteen persons and was sent to the Y.M.C.A. building which had been rapidly transformed into a hospital.

3. The American Red Cross Unit from Providence,

Rhode Island, made up of one hundred and seven persons commanded by Major G. de N. Hough. This unit worked at first in the Halifax Infirmary and later at Bellevue.

4. The American Red Cross Unit (Boston) No. 5, consisting of one hundred and five persons in charge of Dr. W. E. Ladd and of Mr. Samuel L. N. Wolcott (A.R.C.). They went to St. Mary's College, a Roman Catholic institution hurriedly transferred into an emergency hospital.

5. The State of Maine medical unit consisting of twenty-four persons commanded by Major Gilbert M. Elliott. They went to the Halifax Ladies' College which had also been given over as a hospital.

6. The Calais Chapter of the A.R.C. from Calais with twelve of a personnel under command of Dr. William Miner and the Rev. R. A. Macdonald. This unit worked chiefly at relief dressing stations No. 1 and No. 2.

It is absolutely impossible in a short account to do justice to all the individuals and institutions to whom credit is due.

The excellent work on injured eyes done by Dr. Cox, of New Glasgow, has received high praise from his confrères in Halifax.

Captain Goodman of the United States Army left New York at 4 p.m., December 6th, and travelled on a special train which had four baggage cars full of supplies alone. His was administration work and the coördinating of the activities of the American and the Canadian Red Cross.

On all hands it is admitted that confusion in matters medical was reduced to a minimum by the clear-headed manner in which the situation was handled by Lieutenant Colonel McKelvey Bell, A.D.M.S., of the sixth military district. Within a few days of the disaster Colonel Bell had appointed a committee of administration, instituted daily reports from hospitals, ordered daily personal inspection of all hospitals and dressing stations, arranged that an officer take over the charge of statistics obtainable from hospital reports, and finally, that another officer be responsible for transportation. In this way through a central bureau, what

would otherwise have been conflicting activities were coördinated and mutually strengthened for the public good. Lieutenant Colonel Paul Weatherbee, and Captain W. H. Hattie, gave a great deal of time on this, the Medical Relief Committee.

Dalhousie University suffered very greatly in the terrible disaster. The classes which met at nine o'clock had just assembled when, without a moment's warning and in a terrific roar, every window of the medical building was blown in. Bad as the condition of class rooms was, it was nothing to that of the laboratories. In several rooms the ceilings fell in as well as the windows, and the scene of destruction almost baffled description. The laboratories of physiological chemistry, histology and biology have suffered very severely; but efforts are being made to resume teaching in all the medical classes—systematic and practical—on January 3rd, when the Christmas holidays close.

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## The Association

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### THE MEDICAL WEEK IN HAMILTON

**P**REPARATIONS are steadily going on for the coming combined meeting in Hamilton in the latter part of May and the early part of June next. It is, of course, impossible to announce definitely who will be the principal speakers, but if the plans of the various committees are carried out our readers may be prepared to hear the names of some of the foremost members of the profession from both sides of the water.

We regret to state that Dr. James McKenty, of Winnipeg, President-elect for the meeting which was to have been held in that city, has informed us that he will be unable to preside at the Hamilton meeting. It will therefore be necessary for the Executive Council to name some one to act in his place.

The subject of the Symposium for which the Association has become responsible, and which will be held on Friday, June 1st, is "Intracranial pressure in its medical, surgical, and pathological aspects". Prominent members of the profession both in Canada and the United States have been asked to take leading parts.